



Testimony on HB 450
Maryland Community Health Resources Commission –
Health Care Reform – Safety Net Providers
House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 17, 2011
POSITION: SUPPORT

CBH is the professional association for Maryland's network of community mental health programs serving children and adults in the public mental health system. Our member agencies operate outpatient clinics, rehabilitation programs, and a variety of housing, vocational, crisis, and related support services that help people stay out of hospitals and participate in community life as independently and productively as possible.

We support HB 450 for two reasons. First, it broadens the definition of a community health resource to include outpatient behavioral health programs. This is an improvement upon the original language that restricted inclusion to outpatient mental health clinics. Many community behavioral health providers could benefit from the resources available from the Commission but are disallowed from applying because they do not operate clinics.

Perhaps even more importantly, HB 450 also requires an examination of the issues and challenges faced by safety net providers in meeting the requirements of the federal Affordable Care Act. CBH is particularly encouraged by the language regarding information technology. Currently there is financial and technical assistance available in Maryland to assist private physicians, community health centers and dental providers, among others, to implement electronic health records. Once again, behavioral health providers were left to their own devices to find a way to afford and implement electronic health records. This disparity must be addressed if there is to be any expectation of an integrated health system for all Marylanders.

Years of budget cuts have taken their toll on behavioral health and other safety net providers at a time when unprecedented numbers of recipients are joining the roles of Medicaid and the uninsured. HB 450 would draw attention to this critical problem.

We urge a favorable report.

CBH IS A STATEWIDE NETWORK OF COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES.

18 Egges Lane • Catonsville, Maryland 21228-4511 • 410-788-1865 • fax: 410-788-1768
e-mail: mdcbh@verizon.net • website: www.mdcbh.org • Member of USPRA and NCCBH